

Trucial Oman MK4

THE PRINCIPALITIES

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THE PRINCIPALITIES

I. ABU DHABI

This principality is the largest in area and only second in importance to Shārijah. It stretches along the coast from the creek of Ghanādhah on the N. to that of 'Odeid on the W., a distance of over 200 miles. Towards the interior the boundaries are ill defined; they are said to extend on the E. to the Birēimi oasis, and on the S. to the margin of the Ruba' el-Khāli desert. The settled population is believed to be between 10,000 and 15,000, while the Bedouins (chiefly Beni Yās and Manāsir) may number nearly 4,000. The ruling Sheikh is Hamdān ibn Zeid el-Khalifah, who succeeded his brother Tahnūn in 1912, and is described as a firm ruler, able to maintain order. During the period of anxiety following the victories of Ibn Sa'ūd of Nejd in 1913, he endeavoured to introduce arms and ammunition on the plea that the Emir might invade his territories (see above). In the same year he negotiated a truce between the Sultan of Oman and the rebel chiefs. He appears to be a worthy descendant of his predecessor Zeid ibn Khalifah, who in 1908 was the most powerful personality in Trucial Oman. The principality consists of the following districts from E. to W.: Abu Dhabi, Dhafrah (including Beinūnah and Līwah) Sabkhah Matti, Mijan, and 'Aqal, with the possible addition of Khatam. It further includes the islands of Arzanah, Dayyīnah, Dalmah, Dās, Qarnein Salāli, Yās, and Zirko.

i. *Abu Dhabi*, the 'home district', consists of undulating sandy desert, with scanty grazing and poor water-supply; there are, however, wells on or near the routes to the Bireimi oasis at *Bul Huweil*, *Masheirif*, and *Juhar*, and at *Silmiyah*, 20 miles SSE. of Abu Dhabi town. *Sūq Iblis*, about 25 miles E. of the town, is a fantastically shaped outcrop of sandstone forming a landmark on the main Bireimi road. *Sameih*, 6 or 7 miles E. of Khōr el-Ghanādhah, is a hilly place with 7 wells of poor water used as a rendezvous by tribesmen of Abu Dhabi and Dibai when preparing for war. The only village of consequence is *Batin* on the N. shore of the inlet of the same name, 1½ miles SW. of the nearest part of Abu Dhabi town; it consists of 130 date-branch huts belonging to the Āl Bu Maheir and Sūdān tribes; it has some date plantations with wells, and 50 pearl-boats.

The town of *Abu Dhabi* is situated on the coast, about 88 miles SW. of Shārijah, with a population of over 6,000. It extends for about 1½ miles along the shore, and consists chiefly of mat huts,

361 with only a few stone buildings; the Sheikh's large rectangular
 • 621 fort, with towers at the corners, is a little distance inland behind
 438 the town, and on the outskirts in the same direction is a bazaar
 of Indian traders from Tatta in Sind. There are some indifferent
 wells at the back of the town, and shallow pits yield water at
 a place 3-4 miles distant; formerly water was brought by sea
 from Dibai. The bazaar has about 70 shops, more than half of which
 are kept by Persians, and a third by Hindus. The people live
 almost entirely by pearl-diving and fishing, there being little culti-
 vation, but they own more than 700 camels. About half are of the
 Beni Yās tribe, the remainder of various other tribes, chiefly Āl Bu
 Maheir, Sūdān, and Marar. The Persians number 500, the Hindus
 less than a hundred.

At high tide Abu Dhabi becomes an island, through the connexion
 of creeks and backwaters. About 10 miles inland there is a ford
 on the creek called *Khōr el-Maqta'*, connecting the interior of Khōr
 el-Batīn with the sea at a point 2 or 3 miles beyond the town.
 Here a fort on a sandbank in the middle of the creek commands
 the passage to the mainland, which can only be made on foot at
 low tide.

634 ii. *Dhafrah*, between the Persian Gulf on the N. and the Great
 133 Desert on the S., is bounded on the W. by Sabkhat Matti and the
 361 Jāfūrah desert, and on the E. by Khātām. It is a vast region,
 containing at least five known tracts, *Liwah*, *Beinūnah*, *Qufa*, *Taff*,
 and *Dhafrah Proper*. *Liwah*, the most important, lies farthest
 inland; it is a narrow belt 175 miles long, running E. and W., and
 consisting of undulating white sand-dunes, with a series of more than
 20 depressions, each of which contains fertile soil and supports the
 cultivation of a neighbouring village; water is obtained at about
 12 ft. *Beinūnah* is a tract of heavy red sand or soil, with scrub and
 grazing, lying NW. of *Liwah*, and between it and the Gulf. *Qufa*, N.
 of *Liwah*, is a barren region of sandy ridges, with a few shallow wells;
Taff, a maritime strip extending the whole length of *Dhafrah*.
 The tract of *Dhafrah Proper* is E. of *Beinūnah*, and resembles it
 in character. The inhabitants of the whole of *Dhafrah* belong to
 the Beni Yās and Manāsīr tribes. The remaining tracts are of less
 importance. iii. *Sabkhat Matti* is a coastal district W. of *Beinūnah*,
 extending for a distance of about 30 miles and consisting of
 a saline or nitrous marsh without wells or vegetation. iv. *Mijan*,
 W. of the preceding, is a district of stony mounds and firm
 pebbly tracts, with some grazing in winter, and a good many wells.
 v. *Aqal*, between *Mijan* and the base of the peninsula of El-Qatar, is
 a tract of heavy dark sand. vi. *Khatām* lies NE. of *Dhafrah Proper*,

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[632] to 165 ft. at its highest point; except for a little grazing it is barren. Nābiyu Tunb, 8 miles to the W. of Tunb, with an area of 1 mile by $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, is uninhabited and without water.

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• 621
438 The town of Ras el-Kheimah, consisting of about 1,000 houses and forming the administrative centre of the district, is on the Gulf Coast, about 48 miles N. of Shārajah town. Sheikh Sālim ibn Sultān claims to be independent of Shārajah, but his independence has not yet been recognized. The town stands upon a narrow spit of land $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, running parallel to the coast and connected with the mainland at the SW. end; the creek between the spit and the shore, though its entrance at low tide is only 2 ft. deep, has a general depth of 9 ft., and forms a good anchorage for native boats; large vessels must anchor $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to 3 miles NW. of the town.

About half of the houses are of stone and gypsum mortar, the remainder of date-branches. There is an old fort of no military value, and a ruinous wall crosses the isthmus SW. of the town. The inhabitants are a mixed race known as Ahl Ras el-Kheimah, occupying 400 houses, Mahārah (250 houses), Āl 'Alī (150 houses), and Āl Bu Maheir (120 houses), with a few Na'im, Baluchis, and Khōjahs. Drinking-water is scanty and of poor quality. The town possesses about 16,000 date-palms, while the large groves belonging to Sir begin on the mainland opposite the town. The people own 33 pearl-boats and 15 other sea-going vessels, with about 120 fishing-boats; live stock includes some 800 goats, 150 cattle, 175 donkeys, 130 camels, and 20 horses. Trade resembles that of other ports on the Trucial Coast; the chief manufacture is of daggers. At Mahārah, the site of an old village on the E. side of the creek, there is usually a temporary colony, sometimes of Persians from Rams. The chief villages, of 100 houses and above, are as follows:—

In Ras el-Kheimah district:

1. Rams: 400 houses, mostly of mud and stone, on the coast about 8 miles NE. of Ras el-Kheimah town, on the S. side of a small creek with shallow entrance. The inhabitants are Taneij, chiefly pearl-divers and fishermen, but owning date plantations partly situated at Dhāyah, a place now uninhabited, 2 miles inland. Live stock includes 500 goats, 50 donkeys, 20 camels, 20 head of cattle.

2. Sha'am: about 300 houses, mostly of mud, on the coast 17 miles NNE. of Ras el-Kheimah town and 2 miles S. of Ras Sha'am. Inhabitants are all Shihūh, occupied with pearl-diving, fishing, and cultivation, and owning a few pearl-boats and coasting vessels, with 7,000 date-palms. Live stock: 50 donkeys, 30 camels, 20 head of cattle. About 1 mile S. is a small tower upon a hillock used for defence.

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3. *Dibah*, on the coast of the Gulf of Oman, 1 mile S. of Bei'ah; the most southerly village of the Sultanate; nearly 200 houses, half of which are occupied by the peasant class known as Bayādīr, the rest by 'Awānāt, Naqbiyīn, and Sharqiyīn; good wells with water at 25 ft.; 10,000 date-palms. Live stock: sheep, goats, donkeys, and camels. *Dibah* is held as a fief by a relative of the Sheikh, who also governs the small village of *Wamm*, a few miles to the W.

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In the tract of Sir:—

4. *Shimil*, 5 miles inland; 200 houses of Beni Shameili; 4,000 date-palms. Live stock: sheep, camels, and a few head of cattle.

In the tract of Jiri:—

5. *Khatt*, under the hills on the E. side of the plain about 12 miles SSE. of Ras-el-Kheimah town; 100 houses. Oasis of 20,000 date-palms, and a hot spring used for irrigation. Live stock of sheep, donkeys, camels, and cattle.

In Jezirat el-Hamra island:—

6. Village of the same name: 500 houses of the Za'āb tribe, divided into two quarters, *Umm 'Aweimīr* and *Manākh*; 25 pearl-boats. Live stock: 500 sheep, 100 camels, 100 donkeys, and 150 cattle.

ii. *Shameiliyah*, on the coast of the Gulf of Oman, extending for more than 30 miles from Gharfah on the N., to Khōr Kalba on the S., and inland to the Wādī Hām, the boundary towards Shārjah district, the lower part of which it includes. The hills in the N. approach the coast, but recede from it in the S.

The principal villages, all on the coast, are the following, in order from N. to S.:—

1. *Bidyah*; 300 houses of Sharqiyīn fishermen, and cultivators of dates, wheat, and maize; 10 sea-going boats running to Sib and Muscat; 3,500 date-trees. Live stock: 200 head of cattle, 100 sheep and goats, donkeys and camels.

2. *Khōr Fakkān*, fief of a relative of the Sheikh; about 5 miles S. of Bidyah on the S. shore of a bay with sheltered boat harbour at its E. end; 150 houses of Naqbiyīn and Persians, living by cultivation of wheat and dates and by pearl-diving; good water; 5,000 date-palms; a few shops; 4 or 5 coasting vessels running to Muscat.

3. *Fujeirah*, 15 miles S. of Khōr Fakkān, but about 2 miles from the sea; its landing-place is called Ghareifah. *Fujeirah* is surrounded by a 9-ft. wall, with an outer ditch and breastwork on the S. and W. sides. It has 150 houses, chiefly of mud and stone, occupied by Sharqiyīn pearl divers and cultivators. It is the stronghold of the Sharqi leader, Nāsir ibn Shāhin et-Tawār, who claims independent rule over the village and a considerable neighbouring tract.

361 4. *Ghāllah* (or *Kalba*), 4 miles S. of Fujeirah; about 300 houses,
 • 621 chiefly of date-branch, and a few mud go-downs; a small fort held
 438 by a representative of Shārjah. Inhabitants chiefly Naqbiyin and
 Sharqiyyin, fishermen and cultivators. About 25,000 date-palms,
 and tobacco plantations in the hills; wheat also grown. About
 10 sea-going boats run to Muscat, Mekrān, and the Persian
 Coast.

5. *Khōr Kalba*, 4 to 5 miles S. of Ghāllah, situated on a creek,
 and defended by a fort; 150 houses of the Za'āb tribe, who own a
 few sea-going boats. Not to be confounded with Ghāllah, which is
 also called Kalba.

iii. *Dheid*, a plain measuring about 15 miles in each direction,
 situated in the interior about 30 miles due E. of Shārjah town;
 it is bounded on the E. by the hills forming the backbone of the
 Oman promontory, on the W. and N. by sand-dunes, and on
 the S. by the shingly plateau of Qallah Mahāfidh. Dheid is fairly
 well wooded, containing numerous acacia trees, and after rain pro-
 duces abundance of coarse grass. It is also sufficiently watered;
 a stream (*felej*) flowing from *Wādī Haqālah* in the hills to the SE.
 irrigates the cultivation round Dheid village. There are also wells
 at *Muraqqibāt*, 3-4 miles N. of the village, on the route across the
 promontory from Umm el-Qaiwein to Fujeirah, in the Fareikh valley,
 a few miles NW. of Muraqqibāt, at *Tū'i 'Alī*, 6 miles SSW. from the
 village under the sand-dunes bordering the plain, and at *Wushāh*,
 3½ miles S. by E. of the village in the *Wādī Katheirah* on the route
 to the Bireimi oasis. In the summer months a continuous hot wind
 blows; at other times the climate is not oppressive.

There is only one village of any size in the district:—

Dheid, consisting of about 140 date-leaf huts inhabited by Taneij,
 Beni Qitab, and Na'im; in the quarters occupied by the first and
 last there are fortified mud towers. On the E. side of the village
 is a large fort of the Sheikh of Shārjah, with a tower at each angle,
 and held by the governor of the district. Through the precincts
 of the fort runs the above-mentioned stream, the water being
 systematically distributed to the cultivators of the neighbouring
 date-groves; before being tapped for irrigation it is about 3 ft. wide
 and 2 ft. deep, clear, and with a strong flow. A little wheat is grown,
 and there is the usual complement of domestic animals. There
 is reason to think that in the event of British or Indian troops being
 required in Trucial Oman, Dheid would be the most suitable station
 for them in the interior, at least during the cold weather. The water-
 supply is excellent and ample; camel and other grazing is abundant;
 and the place is probably already accessible for wheeled transport

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from Ras el-Kheimah town by way of the Sir and Jiri plains, besides which there are camel routes through the hills connecting it with the ports of the Shameiliyah district on the other side of the Oman promontory.' (*Persian Gulf Gazetteer*.)

iv. *Shārjah*, a narrow strip of sandy desert on the W. coast between 'Ajmān and Dibai; the Sheikh of *Shārjah* also claims the allegiance of *Hamriyah* on the other side of 'Ajmān. The chief centres of a population amounting in the aggregate to about 20,000 are three coastal villages and the town of *Shārjah*.

The town of *Shārjah*, the capital, and residence of the Sheikh, is the most important town on the Trucial Coast. It is situated between 'Ajmān and Dibai, and extends for more than a mile along the E. shore of a small creek parallel to the sea, a detached quarter, *Layyah*, standing on the opposite shore; at low tide the entrance to the creek, on the NE., has only about 2 ft. of water. At the S. end of the town is a bluff rising 30-40 ft.; inland the country is sand with scattered date-groves. There are numerous masonry buildings, including 21 mosques, but most of the houses are of date-branches, and the streets are really narrow and crooked lanes. The population of about 15,000 is composed of Shweihiyin (400 houses), *Hūwalah* and *Sūdān* (300 houses each), *Āl 'Ali*, *Āl Bu Maheir*, *'Abādilah* and *Matārish* (200 houses each), *Na'im* (100 houses), and mixed tribes (700 houses); nearly all the Arabs are Wahabis, calling themselves Hanbali Sunnis. About 200 British-Indians reside in the town, whose interests are protected by a native agent from the British Residency at Bushire. The bazaar has 200 shops, and there is an equal number of warehouses for wheat, rice, and dates. The chief manufacture is of fine woollen abbas. A few sea-going boats are also built yearly, and about 20 vessels run to Basra, the Persian Coast, Bombay, and occasionally to Yemen; there are also nearly 200 pearl-boats, with an equal number of fishing-boats. Date plantations contain some 4 000 trees, and live stock includes about 500 camels, 550 donkeys, 2,200 sheep and goats, and some cattle.

The villages are:—

1. *Hamriyah*, 12 miles NE. of *Shārjah* town and 6 miles NE. of 'Ajmān; about 300 houses. It is situated on the N. side of a creek defended by a fort on the shore, and by several towers. The inhabitants are chiefly *Na'im*, owning about 20 pearl-boats and 1,000 date palms, with live stock including camels, donkeys, cattle, and sheep. The local Sheikh, 'Abd er-Rāhim, nominally under *Shārjah*, is practically independent, and may ultimately be recognized as a Trucial chief.

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- 361 2. *Heir*, between Shārjah town and 'Ajmān, defended by 7 or 8
 • 621 towers; 250 houses of Na'im, owning 25 pearl-boats, 2,500 date-
 438 palms, and live stock of camels, donkeys, cattle, sheep, and goats;
 wells 3-5 fathoms deep.

3. *Khān*, on the N. side of an inlet about 2 miles SW. of Shārjah town. About 200 houses, chiefly of stone set in gypsum mortar or mud; inhabitants, Āl Bu Maheir, Mazāri', and Manāsir, owning 74 pearl-boats and 40 fishing-boats, with camels, donkeys, cattle, and goats.

IV. 'AJMĀN

- 635 A small principality consisting of the town of the same name and
 361 its environs, situated 6 miles SW. of Hamriyah, and 5 miles NE. of
 621 Shārjah, in the territory of which it forms an enclave. It lies on
 438 the S. side of the entrance of a creek with 5 feet of water on the bar
 at low tide. The population is less than 1,000, chiefly Āl Bu Maheir
 and Na'im, all pearl-divers and fishermen, owning about 40 pearl-
 boats and 25 fishing-boats. Fresh water is obtained from wells
 9 ft. deep, of which the locality is constantly changing. There are
 date plantations with about 2,000 trees, but no other cultivation.
 Live stock includes camels, donkeys, cattle, goats, and a few horses.

The Sheikh, Hāmid ibn 'Abd el-'Aziz, who succeeded his murdered father in 1910, is of a rough and quarrelsome character; he has given trouble by connivance at the illicit traffic in arms. Friendly relations usually subsist between the Sheikh and the inhabitants of Bireimi.

V. UMM EL-QAIWEIN

Another small principality composed of a town with the adjoining country, and also forming an enclave in Shārjah. It extends northwards to Jezirat el-Hamra and southwards part of the way to Hamriyah. The town lies about 12 miles NE. of 'Ajmān and 18 miles NE. of Shārjah, on the E. end of a peninsula, forming, with a neighbouring island, a landlocked creek with very shallow entrance; it is defended by a wall across the isthmus, and by detached block-houses. There are about 1,000 houses, 250 of which are of stone, the rest of date-branches; they include 20 shops. The inhabitants, numbering some 5,000, belong chiefly to the Āl 'Ali tribe, and are mostly pearl-divers and fishermen, owning about 70 pearl-boats and 60 fishing-boats, with a sea-going vessel running to Bombay; about 20 boats are built yearly in the town. Live stock includes 720 camels, with donkeys, horses, sheep, and goats. The water is good, obtained from

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* wells 6 ft. deep ; date plantations comprise about 1,500 trees. The only point of importance not on the coast is *Felej Al 'Ali*, about 16 miles SE. of the town, with about 5,000 date-palms belonging to the Sheikh, irrigated by a stream ; this is a place of assemblage for Bedouins in the Umm el-Qaiweh service when called to arms.

The Sheikh, Rashid ibn Ahmed, is at feud with his expelled half-brother Nāsir, who disputes his title. In 1914, on his persistent refusal to settle certain claims of Nāsir, Rashid was coerced by H.M.S.S. *Fox*, *Dartmouth*, and *Odin*, and forced to pay Rs. 10,000, with a fine of Rs. 15,000.

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